



House of Representatives
State of Michigan

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June 19, 2009

The Honorable Mark Meadows - Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Capitol Building, Room 374
P. O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Chairman Meadows,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make my opinions known to you and the members of the House Judiciary Committee with regard to the issue of our state's driver's responsibility fees.

I believe Michigan's draconian policy of charging someone hundreds of dollars, on top of the ticket they've already paid, must be ended. The injustice does not end there, though. Failure to pay means an individual's driver's license will be suspended - further inhibiting that person's efforts to stay viable during these devastating economic times. In a sprawling metropolis like we have in southeastern Michigan, driving is a must for work, groceries and many other necessities.

The driver's responsibility fee policy also contains an unpalatable tinge of institutionalized classism. Uninsured drivers tend to be those in the most impoverished areas, where auto insurance premiums are already disproportionately high. When you combine the potential for a ticket issued for lack of insurance with the driver's responsibility fee, it amounts to nothing more than the repression of the poor. We need not pour salt in the wounds of those already afflicted by the destruction of our state's and nation's economies.

Michigan's policy of assessing additional fees associated with violations that stem from an individual's lack of fiscal viability in the first place absolutely reeks of classism and an overarching disdain for the poor. Driver's responsibility fees must be eliminated from our state's vocabulary to ensure a fair and just system for all.

Once again, thank you for letting me address the committee. I respectfully urge you and committee members to rescind one of Michigan's most flawed policies.

Respectfully,

Bert Johnson, State Representative
5th District
Chair, Detroit Caucus